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The Pool of Flame



By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

Illustrations by Ellsworth Young

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CHAPTER I.—The story opens at Monte Carlo with Col. Terence O'Rourke in his hotel. O'Rourke, a military free lance and something of a gambler, is dressing for appearance in the restaurant below when the sound of a girlish voice singing attracts his attention. Leaning out on the balcony he sees a beautiful girl who suddenly disappears. He rushes to the corridor to see a neatly gowned form enter the elevator and pass from sight.

CHAPTER II.—O'Rourke's mind is filled with thoughts of the girl, and when he goes to the gaming table he allows his remarkable winnings to accumulate indifferently. He notices two men watching him. One is the Hon. Bertie Glynn, while his companion is Viscount Des Trebes, a noted duelist. When O'Rourke leaves the table the viscount tells him he represents the French government and that he has been directed to O'Rourke as a man who would undertake a secret mission.

CHAPTER III.—At his room O'Rourke, who had agreed to undertake the mission, awaits the viscount. O'Rourke finds a mysterious letter in his apartment. The viscount arrives, hands a sealed package to O'Rourke, who is not to open it until on the ocean. He says the French government will pay O'Rourke 25,000 francs for his services. A pair of dainty slippers are seen protruding from under a doorway curtain and the viscount charges O'Rourke with having a spy secreted there.

CHAPTER IV.—When the Irishman goes to his room he finds there the owner of the mysterious letter. It is his wife, Bertie, from whom he had run away a year previous. They are reconciled, and opening the letter he had received, he finds that in Rangoon, India, offers him 100,000 pounds for an Indian jewel known as the Pool of Flame and left to him by a dying friend. O'Rourke tells his wife that it is in the keeping of a friend named Chambret in Algeria.

CHAPTER V.—O'Rourke is forced to fight a duel with the viscount. The arrogant nobleman is worsted in the combat and acts the poltroon.

CHAPTER VI.—The loyal wife bids O'Rourke farewell and he promises to soon return with the reward offered for the Pool of Flame. He discovers both Glynn and the viscount on board the ship which takes him to Algeria.

CHAPTER VII.—Chambret has left Algeria and O'Rourke has to gain a military detachment going across the desert to reach his friend. As he finds the latter there is an attack by bandits and Chambret is shot.

CHAPTER VIII.—Chambret dies telling O'Rourke that he has left the Pool of Flame with the governor general of Algeria. He gives the colonel a signet ring at the sight of which he says the official will deliver the jewel.

CHAPTER IX.—O'Rourke is attacked by Glynn and the viscount who ransack his luggage, but he worsts them in the conflict.

The Honorable Bertie, O'Rourke discovered kneeling in the act of turning the adventurer's traveling gear inside out; at least, he seemed to be trying to do so. Monsieur le Viscount des Trebes on the contrary was seated at ease, facing O'Rourke, a revolver on the cushion beside him, his interest concentrated not upon his captive, upon his collaborator. O'Rourke remarked an expression on the Frenchman's face, a curious compound of eagerness, triumph and apprehension.

Without noting the Irishman's ejaculation, he addressed Glynn: "Find it?"

"No—worse luck!" grumbled the Englishman, rising and kicking the hand-bag savagely. "There isn't so much as a scrap of paper anywhere about him."

The viscount favored O'Rourke with a vicious glance, muttering something about a thousand devils. The Irishman, quick to grasp the situation and inwardly exulting, acknowledged Des Trebes' attention with a winning smile.

"Good evening," he said, and nodded amiably.

"Oh, shut up!" snapped the Honorable Bertie, unhandsofly. "Where's that letter?"

O'Rourke chuckled. "Ye're a hard loser, me bright young friend," he commented. "I thought Englishmen always played the game as it laid."

Glynn grunted and flushed, shamefaced, but the Frenchman cut short the retort on his lips by a curt repetition of Glynn's own question:

"Where's that letter, monsieur?"

O'Rourke glanced at him languidly, yawned, and smiled an exasperatingly strictly personal smile. Then significantly he clinked the handcuffs until they rang on wrist and ankle.

"Answer me!" snarled the viscount, picking up his revolver.

"Divine a word," observed O'Rourke, "will ye get from me if ye shoot me dead, monsieur le viscount. Put down your pistol and be sensible."

Des Trebes' face darkened, suffused with the blood of his rage. Yet the man asserted that admirable control of self which he was able to employ when it suited his purposes. Evidently, too, he recognized the cold common-sense of the wanderer's remark. At all events he put aside the weapon.

"Where's the letter?" he demanded again, more pacifically.

Again O'Rourke yawned with malice prepense, yawned deliberately and exhaustively and dispassionately.

"Not a word," he volunteered at length, "until ye loose me hands and feet. Which," he added, "ye need not hesitate to do, for I'll not strike back—unless ye crowd me."

The viscount scowled darkly for a moment, plainly dubious. Then presumably upon the consideration that he could trust O'Rourke's word and that most assuredly he would learn nothing from him until his request was complied with, he growled an order to Glynn to unlock and remove the handcuffs. The Englishman obeyed.

Free, O'Rourke stretched himself, rubbed his wrists, and observed a collection of his pocket hardware lying upon the seat by him, thrown aside by Glynn in his disgust at not finding what he sought.

"Ye'll not be wanting to deprive me of these few trifles, me gay highwaymen, I'm thinking?" he inquired placidly of the pair. "If ye've no objection I'll make so free as to take back me own."

"Take what you want," returned Des Trebes in an ugly tone. "But—I give you three minutes to tell me where you have put that letter."

"Indeed? Your courtesy overpowers me." The Irishman took up his watch and calmly made a note of the hour—hard upon three in the morning; then, with easy nonchalance stowed it away with the rest of the miscellaneous collection—the knives, coins and keys, his wallet, tickets and so forth.

"Your time," the voice of the viscount interrupted this occupation, "is up." He fingered his revolver "Where is that letter? I am losing patience."

"Where rust nor moth cannot corrupt nor thieves break in to steal," O'Rourke misquoted solemnly. "Steady. Don't call names—or I'll forget myself. I mean that the letter is in fragments, scattered to the four winds of heaven, destroyed. There ye have your answer. Ye fools, did ye think I would carry it about me?"

"By God!" said Glynn tensely. "No—don't shoot him, Des Trebes! He's telling the truth. Make him tell what was in the letter."

"I'm afraid 'tis useless," O'Rourke mocked them. "I have forgotten the contents. What use to me to remember?" he demanded, inspired. "What made ye think I would have it at all? Sure, and the letter was properly Chambret's. Why would I not turn it over to him?"

"Oh, cut it!" Glynn interrupted impatiently. "We know he's dead. The news was heliographed in from the column day before yesterday."

"Quite so. Yet, if ye know so much, if—as I gather—ye suspect that Chambret turned over this precious jewel to me, why do ye not demand it as well as the letter? Not that I have either."

"Because we jolly well know you haven't got the ruby," blurted the Englishman.

"Be quiet!" snapped the viscount. "Quite right," echoed O'Rourke with assumed indignation. "Be quiet, Bertie. Children should be seen and not heard. Mind your uncle." And, "Oh!" he commented to himself. "And they knew I didn't have the Pool of Flame! Let me think. . . . Oh, faith, 'tis just bluffing they are!"

"You say," the viscount continued slowly and evenly, "you've destroyed the letter?"

O'Rourke took up pipe and tobacco. "I told ye," he replied, filling the bowl, "that the letter was non-existent. Now, me man," he continued, with an imperceptible change of tone, "drop the bluff. Turn that pistol away from

(Continued on Page 6)

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From Rev. H. Stabenvoll, Allison, Ia., in praise of Dr. King's New Life Pills:

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ALL DRUGGISTS 11-19

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The germ can only prosper when the condition of the system gives it free scope to establish itself and develop. When there is a deficiency of vital force, languor, restlessness, a sallow cheek, a hollow eye, when the appetite is poor and the sleep is broken, it is time to guard against the germ. You can fortify the body against all germs by the use of Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. It increases the vital power, cleanses the system of clogging impurities, enriches the blood, puts the stomach and organs of digestion and nutrition in working condition, so that the germ finds no weak or tainted spot in which to breed. "Golden Medical Discovery" contains no alcohol, whisky or habit-forming drugs. All its ingredients printed on its outside wrapper. It is not a secret nostrum but a medicine of known composition and with a record of 40 years of cures. Accept no substitute—there is nothing "just as good." Ask your neighbors.



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